

the age.³⁵ But if we carefully observe the origin and spread of modern inventions, we shall discover no trace of the general development of an inventive spirit. Novelties owe their birth to the original talents of comparatively few individuals. whose ideas are adopted—or may be neglected—by the crowd. It is as though a crop crew by imitating the size of a few precocious plants. An impulse to change is inherent in all mankind : but generally it is strictly shackled by the chains of habit, and only becomes effective in those original or eccentric men who are endowed with a special measure of spontaneity. Some of these innovators are recollected and honoured others have been forgotten in the mist of the past. amidst the distraction of wars and migrations. Whether as mystics, philosophers, artists, poets or mechanics, they have brought messages to mankind. Their ideas have generally been disregarded, and they themselves have been despised—often indeed, like the prophets of Israel. they have been cast out and stoned. They have opposed to them the prejudice of consolidated habit, and when they have moved their fellows, it has been rather by the assistance of a chieftain, a priest, or an advertising agency, than by the intrinsic value of their ideas. But we must not forget that their notions have commonly been erroneous, and that society would have perished had it adopted them all. We owe to

inventors
not merely the arts and industries
that adorn
modern life. but the wild. degrading
and cruel
superstitions which have distorted the
path of our
progress into labyrinthine complexity.
and still
misguide vast numbers of mankind.
How extra-
vagant are the cults which within
recent times
have been accepted by the disciples of
eccentric
enthusiasts !